



## TECHNIQUES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH VOCABULARY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL PUPILS

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17534753>

### ARTICLE INFO

Received: 26<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Accepted: 30<sup>th</sup> October 2025

Online: 31<sup>st</sup> October 2025

### KEYWORDS

*Vocabulary teaching, young learners, communicative competence, interactive learning, language pedagogy, motivation.*

### ABSTRACT

*Vocabulary acquisition is a fundamental component of foreign language learning, especially at the primary level. Since vocabulary is the foundation of communication, teaching it effectively enables learners to express themselves fluently and understand others better. This article explores the importance of vocabulary instruction for young learners and provides a comprehensive analysis of effective techniques used to teach vocabulary in primary schools. Moreover, it examines the psychological, linguistic, and pedagogical aspects of vocabulary teaching and offers practical recommendations for classroom application. The findings indicate that visual aids, storytelling, songs, games, and technological tools play a significant role in vocabulary retention and communicative competence.*

**Introduction.** Teaching vocabulary to primary school pupils is both a challenge and an opportunity. On the one hand, vocabulary forms the building blocks of language; on the other hand, teaching young learners requires creativity, patience, and careful planning. As Cameron emphasizes, children learn best when they are actively engaged in meaningful tasks. In this regard, vocabulary instruction should not rely solely on rote memorization but instead integrate words into enjoyable and purposeful contexts [1].

Moreover, in early language education, vocabulary learning is closely linked to children's cognitive and emotional development. Because they are naturally curious and imaginative, primary school pupils respond positively to activities that involve movement, color, music, and play. Therefore, teachers must use techniques that appeal to children's senses and emotions while ensuring systematic and cumulative learning.

It is also essential to note that vocabulary teaching at this stage should aim not only to increase word quantity but also to build the ability to use words appropriately in context. As a result, the teacher's role extends beyond teaching word meanings to developing learners' communicative competence and confidence in using the target language.

To begin with, vocabulary is at the heart of language proficiency. According to Nation, vocabulary knowledge encompasses both form (sound and spelling) and meaning



(concept and usage). When learners master these elements, they can decode written and spoken messages and express their thoughts clearly [5, 126-132]. Furthermore, Thornbury argues that vocabulary should be taught as a dynamic system rather than a static list of words because words interact with one another in meaningful ways [7].

In the context of primary education, vocabulary learning is particularly significant because it influences the development of other language skills. For instance, reading comprehension depends heavily on word knowledge, while listening and speaking rely on quick retrieval of words from memory. Therefore, effective vocabulary instruction forms the backbone of successful English learning in the early stages.

Moreover, vocabulary development at the primary level lays the foundation for lifelong language learning. The earlier children build a solid vocabulary base, the easier it becomes for them to expand it later through exposure to authentic materials, such as books, videos, and conversations.

Despite its importance, teaching vocabulary to children poses several challenges. First and foremost, young learners have short attention spans and tend to lose focus easily. Consequently, lessons must include frequent changes of activity, visual stimulation, and movement. Secondly, children often have limited experience with abstract concepts; therefore, teachers must link new vocabulary to concrete experiences or visual representations.

In addition, pronunciation and spelling may present difficulties because English orthography is often irregular. For example, words such as *through*, *though*, and *tough* can confuse learners due to inconsistent sound-letter correspondence. Therefore, teachers need to provide clear pronunciation models and multisensory reinforcement (listening, speaking, reading, writing).

Another challenge lies in maintaining long-term retention. Research shows that learners forget approximately 80% of new vocabulary within a few days if not reviewed or recycled [6]. Hence, regular repetition and contextual practice are essential to ensure that new words become part of learners' active vocabulary.

Visual aids—such as flashcards, posters, and digital slides—are powerful tools that make abstract vocabulary concrete. By connecting words with pictures or real objects (realia), teachers activate both visual and kinesthetic memory. For example, when teaching the topic “animals,” the teacher may display flashcards of a cat, dog, and bird, allowing pupils to say the words aloud and mimic the animals' sounds. This multimodal experience enhances recall and motivation.

In addition, real objects like fruits, classroom items, or toys can be used during lessons. When children touch and interact with tangible items while hearing their English names, they build stronger word associations. As a result, realia create meaningful learning experiences that appeal to children's curiosity and senses.

Equally important, stories serve as natural and enjoyable contexts for introducing vocabulary. When new words appear in meaningful situations, learners can infer their meanings through context. For instance, in a story about “The Hungry Caterpillar,” children encounter vocabulary related to food, numbers, and days of the week.



Furthermore, teachers can reinforce learning by asking comprehension questions, retelling stories, or dramatizing scenes.

Storytelling also develops emotional engagement, which strengthens memory. When children empathize with characters or events, they are more likely to remember the vocabulary linked to those stories.

Music is an effective mnemonic device. Songs and chants help learners remember words through rhythm, melody, and repetition. Moreover, they create a positive emotional atmosphere and reduce anxiety. For example, songs such as “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes” teach body parts interactively, while “Old MacDonald Had a Farm” introduces animal vocabulary and sounds.

Besides memorization, songs improve pronunciation and intonation, making speech more natural. Chants also provide opportunities for group participation, promoting cooperation and a sense of community in the classroom.

Games are not only entertaining but also pedagogically valuable. They encourage participation, competition, and repetition without boredom. For instance, *word bingo*, *pictionary*, *guess the word*, or *memory cards* can be used to reinforce vocabulary items in an enjoyable way.

Furthermore, games stimulate multiple intelligences (linguistic, spatial, interpersonal) and help learners use vocabulary in authentic communication. For example, a game like “*What’s missing?*” develops both memory and attention while reviewing previously learned words.

In today’s digital era, technology offers new opportunities for vocabulary instruction. Interactive whiteboards, language learning apps (e.g., *Quizlet*, *Duolingo Kids*), and multimedia resources provide engaging, multisensory input. Children can listen to native pronunciation, match images with words, and complete interactive exercises [3, 401-405].

Additionally, digital storytelling and video-based lessons allow pupils to visualize word meanings while listening to contextual dialogues. However, teachers must carefully select age-appropriate materials and monitor screen time to maintain a healthy learning balance.

Semantic mapping helps learners visualize the relationships among words. For example, when teaching the word “weather,” the teacher can create a map linking it to *sunny*, *rainy*, *windy*, *cold*, and *hot*. This method promotes deeper understanding and assists in long-term memory retention. Similarly, word association activities (e.g., “When I say *fruit*, you say...”) encourage mental connections between known and new words.

Another essential principle of vocabulary teaching is systematic repetition. Learners need to encounter new words multiple times in varied contexts to transfer them from short-term to long-term memory. Therefore, teachers should recycle vocabulary through classroom routines, games, and cross-curricular activities.

For example, the words learned in a “colors” lesson can reappear during art projects, while food vocabulary can be used in role-plays such as “At the Restaurant.” In this way, language becomes functional rather than mechanical. Additionally, reviewing old words before introducing new ones strengthens cognitive connections and prevents forgetting.



Equally important, the emotional environment of the classroom significantly affects vocabulary learning. A supportive and positive atmosphere encourages pupils to take risks and use new words freely. Teachers should praise effort, correct errors gently, and involve pupils in pair or group work.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion, teaching English vocabulary to primary school pupils requires a balance of creativity, structure, and understanding of child psychology. Vocabulary learning becomes most effective when it is interactive, contextualized, and enjoyable. The integration of visual aids, storytelling, songs, games, and digital tools enables learners to grasp new words naturally and meaningfully. Moreover, repetition, semantic mapping, and positive classroom dynamics ensure long-term retention and communicative competence. Ultimately, the success of vocabulary instruction lies not only in how many words children learn but in how confidently and meaningfully they can use them in real-life communication. By adopting diverse and child-centered techniques, teachers can lay a strong linguistic foundation that supports lifelong learning and language mastery.

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